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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN COURSES IN EDUCATION

The idea which has controlled the work of the Department of Education of the University of Chicago from the beginning of its organization is that scientific facts about school practices and results, secured through the use of historical, statistical, and experimental methods, can be put into a form which is as specific and exact as the professional information given in a school of medicine or engineering.

The first decade of the department's history was devoted to building up a faculty and collecting the specific scientific materials necessary to a realization of this fundamental idea. Courses have gradually been worked out which replace the vague general forms of instruction typical of normal-training institutions and teacher-training departments in colleges and universities. For example, instead of general courses in the history of the theory of education, dealing primarily with books written by Rousseau and other theorists, the department has slowly developed courses in historical technique, in the history of modern methods, and in a few of the periods of American education, leaving it for those thus trained in historical method to carry on detailed work along specific, practical lines. The courses in administration are no longer omnibus courses covering a great variety of topics, but quite specific, each dealing with one group of administrative problems. The curriculum has been detached from other aspects of administration; finance has been made a separate topic; the problems of supervision have been treated in courses which have gradually accumulated content and become definite in scope and purpose. In statistics and in experimental methods, in classroom technique and in the investigation of particular school subjects, such as reading and writing, the department has been able to accumulate large funds of new materials and to give a definiteness and scientific character to its courses which are quite unique.

The development which has thus been going on for ten years was in some measure impeded by war conditions. But the department is now able to go ahead with its full plans. The next circular announcing courses will give expression to the idea above described in clearer form than has ever been possible before. Several new courses will be announced, and the conditions for the advanced degrees will be laid down in terms of the complete program.

Briefly put, the courses will be of three types: (*a*) informational courses intended to summarize the facts now at hand and to get students started in their investigations; (*b*) courses in scientific technique; (*c*) courses carrying forward researches into unexplored fields. Examples of the (*a*) type are: School Surveys, School Buildings, Administration of the Teaching Staff, Administration of Pupils, Curriculum, Classroom Methods, General Teaching Technique, Administration of Finance, Physical and Mental Development of Pupils, Supervisory Problems, High-School Administration, Elementary-School Administration, etc. Class (*b*) includes Elementary and Advanced Statistics, Laboratory Methods, introductory and advanced, Development of the Technique of Tests, and Historical Methods. Class (*c*) will include courses in the Scientific Investigation of Reading, Arithmetic, and Spelling, in the advanced treatment of such topics as are partially covered in the elementary courses, in the treatment of the junior high school, and in the organization of normal-school courses.

The development of something like a full series of such scientific courses will give the department more than ever before the character of a complete professional school ready to take its place with medicine, law, and engineering. The university is adding to the teaching staff in order to carry out this program and has instituted a campaign for the much-needed enlargement of the physical facilities to accommodate the work.

One important step was taken last September toward this general program in the appointment of H. C. Morrison to a professorship. He is superintendent of the Laboratory Schools. During the next year the elementary school will be organized as a six-year school, and the high school and junior college will be organized as a single unit, giving a new type of adolescent school which, it is believed, will exercise a large influence in turning American school organization into channels of more economical and effective operation.